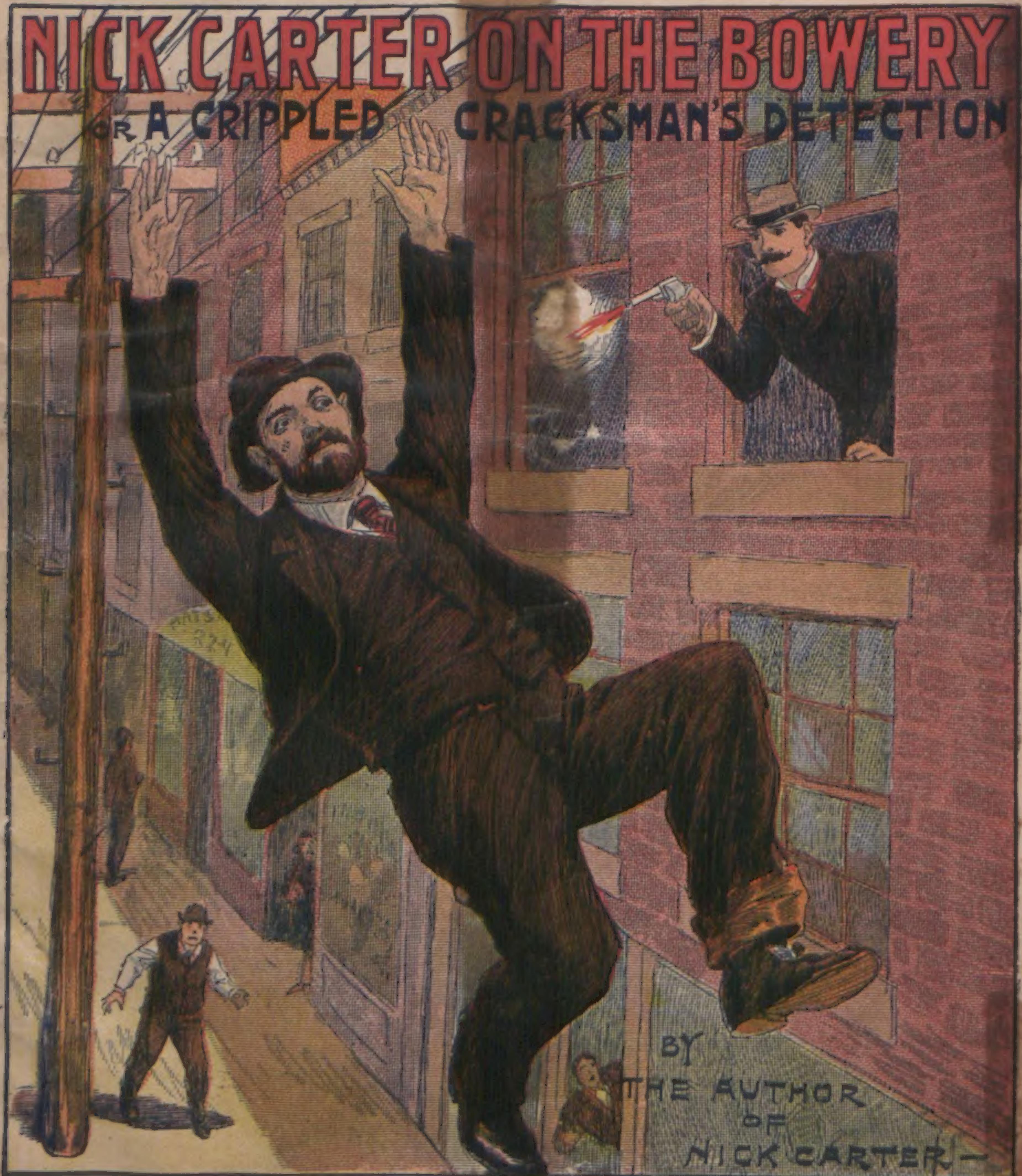


NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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HOLLIDAY RAISED HIS PISTOL, AND WITHOUT WARNING FIRED POINT-BLANK AT THE GREAT DETECTIVE.

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Nick Carter on the Bowery; OR, A CRIPPLED CRACKSMAN'S DETECTION.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

THE BOLDEST ROBBERY ON RECORD.

Crash! Bang! Crash!

Two full sized bricks had been thrown with all force at the heavy plate-glass window of a jewelry store in Maiden lane, New York City.

It was exactly half-past two of a hot day in July, and the generally crowded thoroughfare was practically deserted.

The bricks completely shattered the lower half of the glass, heavy as it was, leaving an opening large enough to admit two human hands and arms.

"Quick, now!"

"I've got it. Hold open the bag!"

As the second speaker spoke he thrust two hands into the window and seized a large tray containing a magnificent display of diamonds.

The tray was quickly withdrawn and the contents swept into a small valise.

A single small diamond fell to the ground, but this the two thieves did not stop to pick up.

The valise was closed and the tray thrown into the gutter, and both men started on a dead run up Maiden lane toward Broadway.

Two men on the opposite side of the street had heard the crash of glass, but before they could reach the spot the thieves had vanished.

Inside the store all was confusion.

Three clerks and the proprietor had become aware of the robbery, and yet all were for the moment unable to make a dash after the daring thieves.

The head clerk had been standing within three yards of the show window when it was smashed in. He had seen some one thrust his hands through the opening and seize the tray and had then made a dash for the front door.

The door could not be opened.

Outside was a hasp and staple, through which a big padlock was secured every night and on Sundays.

The hasp had been placed over the staple and a stick of wood rammed through the latter, making all fast.

"Open the door, Haskins!" cried the proprietor, wildly. "Catch the thief!"

"I can't open the door, Mr. Levy!" panted the head clerk, tugging frantically at the handle.

"Can't open it?"

"No, they've locked it from the outside."

The proprietor of the jewelry store began to rave and swear.

"Break the door down! Ring the alarm!

here was a hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds on that tray! I will be ruined!"

"I'll go down through the basement!" cried one of the junior clerks.

"I'll see if I can't climb through the broken window," added another.

"Go on! Do something! I will be ruined! A hundred thousand in diamonds!" fumed the proprietor. "My gracious! Haskins, will you never get that door open?"

By this time there was a crowd collecting in the street. A neighboring storekeeper saw the stick of wood stuck through the staple and promptly kicked it out, and in an instant the door was flung open by Haskins, who was trembling as much as if he had committed the robbery himself and been caught at it.

"Where is he? Stop the thief!" roared Levy, frantically, as he dashed up and down on the sidewalk. "He has stolen a hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds!"

Without waiting, Haskins started up Maiden lane toward Broadway, while two of the other clerks went down toward the East River. Levy continued to stamp up and down in front of his store, wringing his hands, and wondering why the entire police department did not respond to his call.

It was not long before a policeman arrived, and a ward detective soon followed.

As soon as they had some of the particulars of the occurrence they sent word to headquarters, and an alarm was sent out all over the city, and also to Brooklyn, Long Island City, and Jersey City.

In an hour after he had gone Haskins came back. He had seen nothing of the men who had snatched the tray from the window.

Then the other two clerks came back with a similar tale.

Levy was frantic, and as soon as he could get his stock into his safes and have his window boarded up, he called on the nearest police captain and then upon Superintendent Byrnes.

The story of the robbery, or as much of it as was known, was gone over carefully.

While the diamond dealer was at the superintendent's office, Nick Carter, the world's famous detective, chanced in.

He listened to Levy's story with deep interest, and made a note of all the diamond dealer had to say.

Superintendent Byrnes smiled as he saw Nick's manner.

"What do you think of it, Carter?" he asked, in a low tone.

"If it's all the same to you I would like to investigate this crime," returned Nick.

"What, you?"

"Yes, superintendent."

"But I thought you intended to follow up that Mauch Chunk matter for Colonel Wilson."

"So I do. I've got an idea the two things may hang together."

"Ah, I see!"

"I may be mistaken, but I'll risk it."

"Well, just as you say. Mr. Levy, this is Mr. Carter—"

"Carrington, from Philadelphia," finished Nick. "I am a detective, and I would like to follow up this case for you."

Levy looked at Superintendent Byrnes.

"Carrington is a first-class man," was the superintendent's reply to the inquiring look. "You could not place the case in better hands."

"I have heard of a Mr. Carter," said Levy, slowly. "A friend told me—"

"It will be impossible to get Nick Carter," interrupted Nick.

"Yes, you cannot get Mr. Carter," added the superintendent. "He is busy on another case."

"I am sorry——"

"You will find Mr. Carrington a first-class man," went on the superintendent, heartily.

"Then, sir, I will engage you at once, and I will pay you well, if you succeed in getting back the diamonds," said Levy to Nick.

"Good!" returned Nick, and he winked at his superior officer. "I will be down at your place to interview Haskins, your clerk, in half an hour. Please remember that from now on you will know me as Mr. John Peel only."

"John Peel, eh? All right; anything, so long as you get back my diamonds," said Levy, somewhat mystified.

He wished Nick to go with him to the store in Maiden lane, but this the great detective refused to do.

So Levy left to hunt up Haskins, who had again gone off in search of the thief.

As soon as Levy had gone, Nick changed his disguise, and then he sat down to send a note to Chick, his chief assistant.

"I don't quite understand why you did not care to be introduced to Levy properly," observed Superintendent Byrnes, as Nick was about to leave the office.

"I objected because he is one of the fellows who likes to brag about what he has done," returned Nick. "He would let the whole world know that I was on the case, and he might thus spoil my game."

This well illustrated Nick Carter's extreme shrewdness.

That very evening the two thieves read a full account of the robbery in an extra of one of the afternoon papers.

This account stated that Mr. Levy had, at a large expense, obtained the services of Car-

rington, the Philadelphia detective, to ferret out the mystery.

"Carrington? Who is he?" asked one of the other.

"I don't know," was the reply. "But I can tell you one thing: I am mighty glad he didn't hire Nick Carter to work on the case."

"So am I. We did the job slick enough, but Carter is the devil himself for running down business men like us."

"Right you are."

CHAPTER II.

THE CROOK OF AN ARM.

When Nick Carter arrived at the jewelry store in Maiden lane he found a mob of several dozen men and boys looking in the gutter for diamonds. The small gem the thieves had let fall had been found, and this had stimulated a search which lasted for the best part of a week.

Nick was disguised as an elderly business man. He found Levy anxiously awaiting his arrival, and at once introduced himself.

"Glad you have come, Mr. Carrington—I mean Mr. John Peel," said the diamond dealer. "Haskins, come here!"

And Haskins, who had also just arrived, came forward.

"I will examine him privately," said Nick, and without more ado beckoned the head clerk to follow him into one of the private offices connected with the store.

"Excuse me—but—but I trust you do not—not think I had anything to do with the affair," faltered Haskins, still in a tremble.

"Well, you saw part of it," returned Nick, dryly.

"Oh, yes, I did—but that is all, sir. I haven't the least idea who the thieves are."

"How many were there?"

"Two, sir."

"You are sure there were not more?"

"I saw only two."

"Describe them both."

"I can hardly do that. I only got a glimpse of them."

"Well, describe what you can."

"Well, sir, they seemed to be both large men."

"Six feet high?"

"Pretty nearly that."

"And heavy in proportion?"

"One was heavy; the other quite slim."

"How was the heavy one dressed?"

"In a dark suit; that is all I can remember."

"And the slim one?"

"I think he had on a light coat."

"Did they have straw hats?"

"The slim one, who held the bag, might have had. The one who seized the tray had a soft hat."

"Did you see his face?"

"No; he had the hat pulled way down and his head bent low."

"Where were you standing when the window was broken?"

"Right at the little desk back of the railing."

"Did you see the second brick strike the glass?"

"No, sir. Both bricks were thrown almost at the same time."

"As if each man had thrown one?"

"Yes."

"What did you see first?"

"I saw the bottom of the plate of glass fall outward, and then the thief's arm thrust in."

"Did he make a dive for the tray instantly?"

"Yes, he did, but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, I suppose it didn't amount to anything. He took hold of the tray rather queerly."

"How do you mean?"

"I can't tell you very well. I would have to show you with a tray."

"Very well, get a tray, then."

"But I don't suppose it amounts to anything."

"Never mind; get the tray."

Haskins at once disappeared, and while he was gone Nick Carter pulled up his sleeve and tied his handkerchief in a hard knot around his elbow.

Haskins soon reappeared bearing the very tray which had been taken from the window, and which had afterward been found in the gutter.

"The tray was standing like this," he said, setting the article down. "When the thief took it up he handled it something like—like this, but not exactly—more this way."

"Is this the movement?" asked Nick Carter, as he placed the tray as Haskins had before set it and then picked it up stiffly and with a side movement of the elbow.

"That's it to a T!" cried the jeweler's clerk.

"Good enough. Now go on with your story."

"But your imitation of that movement was wonderful!" said Haskins, in deep admiration.

Nick smiled.

"Thanks for the compliment. You saw him pick up the tray. What did he do next?"

"The other fellow had a valise, wide open, and into that the thief shoved the diamonds with one hand, while he held the tray with the other."

"Did you see the valise plainly?"

"Quite plainly; yes."

"Describe it."

"It was a very small affair, flat and broad."

"Black, with silver trimmings?"

"It was dark. I am not sure about the trimmings."

"What did the two do after the diamonds were shoved into the bag?"

"They dodged down kind of under the window. I thought they ran toward Broadway."

"Then what did you do?"

"I ran for the door, and so did all the others. But it was fastened and we could not get out."

"And you saw nothing of the thieves after that?"

"Nothing."

"Who kicked the stick from the staple in the door frame?"

"Mr. Goldstein, from across the way."

"Did any of you pick up the stick?"

"I believe Mr. Levy picked it up."

"Where are the brickbats?"

"Still in the window. Mr. Levy thought he would leave everything as it was, for you and the detectives to examine."

"Very thoughtful of him. That's all."

Nick allowed Haskins to go about his business and then told Levy to call his clerks away while he examined the show window from which the one hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds had been stolen.

The window was boarded up tightly, so that no prying eyes could see it from the outside.

Lighting the gas and turning it on full, the great detective set to work to look for any clew which the spot might afford.

He first examined the bricks and at once came to the conclusion that they had been taken from a pile which lay up the street less than half a block away.

Then he examined the bottom of the show window, which was covered with green cloth.

At first he encountered nothing but bits of splintered glass.

The window had contained two other trays of precious stones, but these had not been touched, and were now resting in one of the store safes.

"I suppose Mr. Levy thought them too valuable to leave out, even for examination," was Nick's grim mental comment. "I will have to make him bring them out."

Nick continued to examine around the window.

Presently his sharp eyes caught sight of a bit of cloth hanging fast to the broken glass, in a crack.

The bit was composed of merely half a dozen strands, no more, but Nick unfastened it and placed it in his pocket-book as carefully as if it was a diamond.

"That was torn from the thief's sleeve, owing to his awkwardness in the use of his broken arm," said Nick to himself. "It may prove to me what kind of a garment he wore."

Nick could find no other possible clew in the window, and a few minutes later announced to Levy that that part of the investigation was at an end.

"And now show me those other trays that were in the window," he added.

"But they contain nothing," said the jeweler.

"Never mind; show them to me, anyway."

Grumbling to himself, the jeweler did so. The trays were covered with loose cloth, arranged in waves and hollows, and in one of the hollows Nick discovered something which had escaped the scrutiny of the jeweler.

It was a topaz, of fair size, perfectly yellow in color, and finely cut.

On one side of the precious stone was a deep spot of red, as if a drop of blood had dried there.

Levy did not see Nick pick the topaz from the tray, and without saying anything about his find, the great detective slipped the stone into his pocket.

The trays contained nothing else that Nick cared to look at, and a moment later Nick handed them back to the jeweler.

"By the way," he said, carelessly, "do you deal in topazes?"

"I get them on order," was Levy's reply. "There is not now much demand for them."

"You have none in stock?"

"No. But I will get you a fine one," went on Levy, quickly, "if only you will get my diamonds back."

"I'll do what I can," returned Nick.

The trays put away, Nick walked around the store several times and chatted for a few minutes with each one of the clerks.

"Now I am ready to hunt down the thieves," he said to Levy, a quarter of an hour later.

"Very well, Mr. Carrington," returned the diamond dealer. "I sincerely hope you catch them."

"That topaz belonged to the thief, who cut his finger and broke his ring when he grabbed for the tray with the diamonds," thought Nick to himself, as he emerged upon the street. "Besides that, no one in the establishment wears a coat to match the bit of cloth which was stuck in the crack of the glass; so most likely that was a part of the thief's coat sleeve."

CHAPTER III.

PUTTING TWO AND TWO TOGETHER.

On leaving Levy's establishment on Maiden lane, Nick Carter stepped into a hallway not far away, and once more changed his disguise, this time arraying himself as a countryman, with a wisp of chin whiskers and white hair.

He blundered along the crooked street until near Broadway, and then accosted a fellow who was selling shoestrings along the gutter.

"Say, how long hev yeou been a-standin' here?" he asked, anxiously.

"Me stand-a here most all-a day," returned the gutter merchant, who was an Italian.

"I'm a-lookin' for my two sons, big fellers, one stout and one slim," went on Nick. "Did you see 'em a couple of hours ago? One had a black bag and a hat like yourn."

The Italian thought for a moment.

"Yes, me see-a dem go cross Broadway in

a great-a hurry," he replied. "You buy-a shoestrings, boss?"

"Ye-as, if you air a-tellin' the truth. Which way did my sons go?"

"Dat-a way-a," and the shoestring peddler pointed down Cortlandt street.

"Thank yeou," returned Nick, and tossing the fellow a couple of cents, he worked his way across the crowded street and struck down Cortlandt street, and did not stop until he had reached the Pennsylvania Railroad ferry.

Here he began a quiet but diligent search for the two daring robbers, and finally found that they had crossed the North River to Jersey City.

"That settles it," said Nick to himself, and he smiled contentedly. "They are the same birds, just as I supposed from the start. And they are a pair of wonders, too!"

A few words of explanation will make Nick Carter's words clear to the reader.

Just four days previous to the great diamond robbery, Nick Carter had been called to Mauch Chunk by Colonel Wilson, a former friend.

The colonel had an important bit of business which he wished Nick to take hold of—a mystery that needed clearing up.

Colonel Wilson owned a coal mine not over three miles from Mauch Chunk, and employed over six hundred men.

The men were paid off at the end of each month, and the money for this purpose was brought by the colonel's cashier, a fellow named Axtell, from Allentown, whenever needed.

On the last trip from Allentown to the mine back of Mauch Chunk City the bag containing the amount of the pay-roll, twenty-eight thousand dollars, had been looted.

It had been under the seat in Axtell's buggy from the time he left Mauch Chunk until he had reached the office at the mine,

and yet, when opened, it had been found empty.

Axtell swore that the bag had not been out of his sight for a moment, and he likewise swore that the money had been intact when he had left the bank at Allentown.

Nick Carter had journeyed to Mauch Chunk and interviewed the cashier, and had come away convinced that the man thought at least that he was telling the truth, whether in reality he was or not.

The affair was a great mystery, and the only clew which Nick had gotten from Axtell was the fact that a suspicious-looking pair had hung around the coal mine for several days previous to the robbery.

One of these men had had his arm in a sling and had told a miner that he had had it broken during a ride on the Switchback Gravity Railroad. He had also said that he was from New York and intended to get back as soon as he could raise the money to pay his fare.

Nick had traced these two men up for two days and found out that they had boarded with an old Irishwoman who kept a tough-looking ranch over near the burning mines.

By skillfully handling the old woman and sending out pretty frequently for the beer, Nick, in the disguise of a broken-down miner, had learned from her that the two men had left rather suddenly on the very day of the robbery. She had also heard one of them say something about diamonds, though what it was she either could not remember or else did not care to tell.

Nick had remembered about the mentioning of diamonds, although they evidently had nothing to do with Colonel Wilson's case, and it was this which caused him to take up the Maiden lane robbery when he heard of it in Superintendent Byrnes' office. Had it been otherwise Nick would have left the close-fisted diamond-dealer to the tender mercies of the ward detectives.

"It's only a question of where the pair will turn up next," said Nick to himself. "I am glad I sent Chick down to Mauch Chunk. He can work up that end of the string while I take up this."

It was necessary for Nick to pay a visit to his home before proceeding further with his investigations, and he accordingly walked back up Cortlandt street to the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad station.

Arriving home, he found that Wick, his second assistant, had just come in from a trip over to Fifth avenue.

The face of his assistant was full of thought, and Nick saw at once that he had something unusual on his mind.

"Well, I've just heard of a case that beats the Dutch!" exclaimed Wick. "It's the oddest on record."

"Well, give it to us, Wick, but be quick, for I have no time to spare."

"You know or have heard of Mrs. Rufus Lansdowne, of Fifth avenue."

"You mean the rich widow of the late Captain Lansdowne?"

"Yes."

"Certainly; I know her very well."

"This morning she was drugged and robbed in her own house."

"The deuce you say!"

"Yes, and it's the most marvelous piece of work of that kind on record."

"Give me the particulars."

"I'll tell you all I know, which is not much. Mrs. Lansdowne had been out shopping, and when she returned home she found a tall, fine-looking man awaiting her in her parlor."

"Well?"

"He introduced himself as a picture agent and insisted upon showing her a portfolio of pictures he carried."

"Nothing strange in that!" laughed Nick.

"She didn't want to see the pictures, and almost ordered him to leave, but he opened

his portfolio and drew out his pictures and forced them into her hands."

"Why didn't she call a servant and have him fired out?"

"There was only one chambermaid in the house at the time, and she was on the top floor of the house making some beds. She grew rather alarmed at the man's manner, and while wondering what she should do, took up a couple of the pictures, and the next thing she knew she was drugged."

"He caught her and drugged her?"

"No; he didn't touch her."

"Then he must have squirted something in her face."

"He didn't do that, either. She was drugged through looking at the pictures."

"See here, Wick, have you been drinking?" demanded Nick, sternly.

"No, I've not been drinking. Didn't I just tell you the case beat the Dutch?"

"But how could she be drugged by merely looking at the pictures?"

"That's what I am trying to find out. She said the ink on the pictures seemed to overpower her, and before she could lay them down she was so overcome that she could hardly stand."

"Humph! that certainly is something new," mused Nick. "What happened next?"

"Of course the young man made himself perfectly at home. He took her diamond rings, her ear-rings, and brooch, and her pocket-book, and half a dozen other articles which were handy, and when she came to, about an hour later, he had decamped, leaving not a trace behind."

"Did she notify the police?"

"No; she sent down here for Nick Carter or one of his assistants, and as you were out, I went up. I have been on a still hunt for the daring thief ever since."

"Have you succeeded in tracing him?"

"I traced him as far as a saloon in Fulton

street, where I discovered that he had been joined by another man, but I could trace him no farther."

"I suppose Mrs. Lansdowne described the fellow pretty well?"

"Yes; she was much struck by his appearance, and also by a big topaz ring he wore."

Nick Carter jumped up as if shot.

"A topaz ring, did you say?" he demanded.

"Yes. She said the stone was very large, and seemed to be loose in its setting."

Nick put his hand in his pocket, withdrew his wallet, and brought forth the topaz he had picked up from the tray in the Maiden lane store.

"There's the topaz, I'll bet all I am worth!"

"Great Scott! Nick. Where in blazes did you find it?"

Nick told him.

"Well, that staggers me!" cried Wick, when his chief had finished. "It's almost too wonderful to be true."

"Nothing in the criminal line is too wonderful to be true, Wick. Criminals are getting smarter and more daring every day, and the only thing for us detectives to do is to follow closely upon their heels and get onto every new wrinkle."

"But look at the daring of that fellow! At ten o'clock he drugs and robs a lady on Fifth avenue, and at half-past two he steals a fortune in diamonds from a Maiden lane jewelry store."

"And we haven't got to the bottom of it all yet, Wick."

"What do you mean?"

"We have not yet discovered what the other fellow did this morning—I mean the fellow the so-styled picture agent met at the saloon in Fulton street."

"Then you think he was committing some crime, too?"

"Most likely; although it is possible that he took a brief holiday. Those men are desper-

ate fellows, and they are scooping in all they can lay hands on previous to skipping out of the country."

"Well, they got five thousand dollars' worth of stuff away from Mrs. Lansdowne and about a hundred thousand dollars' worth from Levy. That is not bad to start on."

"They didn't start there, to my way of thinking—they started in Mauch Chunk, where they robbed Colonel Wilson's cashier of twenty-eight thousand dollars," and Nick related the particulars of that affair to his second assistant.

"Well, they are wonders, and no mistake," said Wick. "What's to be done about them?"

"We must hunt them down, and that, too, without delay. You can make a tour of the pawnshops and see if any of the stuff is put out, and I'll go over to Jersey City and take up the trail there."

Nick Carter was as good as his word. He finished up his work at his office without delay, and half an hour later found him bound across the North River.

CHAPTER IV.

A PALACE OF CRIME.

Nick Carter was certain of one thing. That was that the two criminals with which he had to deal were not of the common rank and file of crooks and robbers.

"They are too daring," he reasoned to himself. "And it is more than likely that they are getting ready for even a bigger strike. They want to draw the attention of the police to what they have already done, and thus clear the field for bigger operations."

On reaching Jersey City, Nick made a number of inquiries in his own quiet way and learned that the two men with the small black bag had been seen walking toward the ferry-house.

He turned to the depot, which is but a

few steps away from the ferry-house, and here the great detective found out, though not without considerable trouble, that the men had taken a car for Bayonne.

He was soon on his way to Bayonne. He had not the slightest idea where the two men had alighted, and so got off almost at the first street in the rather widely scattered city.

Not far away was a saloon, and, deeming this as good a place as any to start investigations, Nick entered and called for a glass of beer.

The great detective was dressed as a commercial traveler and carried a square satchel, which he planked on the floor beside him. He asked the barkeeper to drink with him, and the two were soon in friendly conversation.

"How's business?" asked Nick, by the way of opening up.

"Slow, devilish slow," was the reply.

"Too bad—the same cry all over."

"What line you in?"

"Electrical goods."

"That is a good business to be in when times are good, I imagine. Electrical bells and such contrivances are getting all the go."

"Yes, it's bang up when people have the money. You don't use any of my goods here, I take it?"

"We've got an electrical door bell, but that's all O. K."

"Oh, I don't mean door bells," said Nick, with a wink. "I mean electrical calls for a card table—latest patents—tell when the police are around, and all that."

"Oh! No, we've got no use for that. The proprietor is a crank and won't let the boys run a 'shady.'"

"There's money in it."

"I know there is. But he won't have it."

"I heard that there was another fellow here to-day with electrical goods," went on Nick. "Did you see him? A tall fellow, with a small, black bag. Had another with him with him, I think."

The barkeeper thought for a moment.
 "Was one fellow stout and the other slim?"
 "That's right."
 "Then I saw them."
 "Where?"
 "Up at McDivvers' place."
 "Where is that?"
 The barkeeper gave Nick the directions.
 "No doubt you have heard of it before," he added.
 "I have."

"I was up there at about half-past three, and the men just came in. I thought they must be agents of some kind."

"I reckon they want to sell McDivvers their goods," replied Nick. "I must follow them up and cut them out if I can. Have another with me, and then I'll be going."

The beer was served, and after paying his bill, the great detective lost no time in leaving the place.

"That was dead easy," he thought, as he hurried up the street. "If I continue to be so lucky, I'll leave my game before night."

When McDivvers' place was reached, Nick hesitated as to how to proceed next.

McDivvers' was a fine old mansion which evidently been built before the war. It was painted pure white, with green blinds, and had a great, wide piazza in front, with tall, and heavy columns. A large garden surrounded the house, filled with choice flowers and shrubs.

"A tony gambling hell, and nothing less," Nick to himself, as he made a general survey. "Now, what can those two thieves be up to? What connection with Tony McDivvers?"

With a few slight changes in his direction, Nick walked boldly into the garden and up to the piazza. A big brass knocker hung from the door, and as Nick reached it, he knocked twice.

The door was almost instantly opened by a woman dressed in a dark, flowing gown, who stepped him

"Is Mr. McDivvers in?" asked Nick.
 "No, sah."
 "When will he be in?"
 "Can't say, sah. He has gone to Philadelphia, sah."
 "Too bad! I wanted to see him on business. Are you in charge?"
 "No, sah; Mrs. McDivvers, sah."
 "I would like to see her."
 And Nick handed out a card bearing the name:

HAROLD CANBERRY.

The negro invited Nick to take a seat in the parlor, and went off upstairs.

The parlor was most luxurious, furnished in the very latest of style. In the rear was a large open doorway leading to an immense dining-room, where a table was set. At one side of the dining-room a beautifully carved sideboard fairly groaned with its wealth of silverware.

"By Jove! I never thought they had anything so tony outside of New York City!" murmured Nick to himself, as he took in his surroundings. "Gambling must pay here as well as anywhere."

Nick was not kept long waiting. There was a rustle of a silk dress on the stairs, and then a middle-aged woman swept into the room.

Her appearance filled Nick with wonder. She was tall and strikingly handsome, and upon her fingers and in her ears glittered diamonds of almost priceless value. It was easy to see that in her younger days she had been a reigning society belle.

"This is Mr. Harold Canberry?" she said, in a deep musical voice.

"Yes, madam," returned Nick, bowing lowly. "I have the extreme pleasure of meeting Mrs. McDivvers, I presume?"

"Yes." The woman held out her hand, and Nick took it, and then she turned away.

"Yes, we have met, but where I cannot just now tell you," returned Nick, boldly. "It must have been when I called upon your husband on business."

"I believe Jean said you wished to see him now?"

"Yes. You know, I am an agent for certain electrical goods which I am introducing in certain houses." Here Nick looked the woman squarely in the face. "I knew Mr. McDivvers would wish to see the goods, so I made it a point to call over from New York to see him."

"Electrical goods?" she repeated, slowly.

"Yes." Nick lowered his voice. "Table, roulette wheel, and so forth. Something like that, and something that never fails to work."

"Oh, I see." Mrs. McDivvers smiled as sweetly as though he had paid her a compliment. "It is too bad my husband is in Philadelphia. But I expect him back to-night or early to-morrow morning."

"Perhaps I might wait a while, then."

"Do so, if you can spare the time. Will you not come in and have some refreshments?"

Nick replied that he would with pleasure, and the two passed into the dining-room.

Mrs. McDivvers ordered a servant to prepare a lunch for Nick and also open some wine which was brought up from a vault, and in less than ten minutes the great detective was dining at the gambling-house for his expense.

While Nick was sampling the wine Mrs. McDivvers excused herself for a moment and left the apartment.

Nick would have followed her, but the presence of a servant prevented.

When the woman of the house returned, she was somewhat excited, and Nick was about to inquire why.

"The supply's sufficient," said Mrs. Mc-

Divvers, in explanation of her agitation. "They seem to grow worse every day."

"Some of them are not particularly bright, that's a fact," returned Nick.

Although she appeared to wish Nick to remain until her husband's return, yet Mrs. McDivvers grew more nervous every moment.

"Mr. Canberry!" she exclaimed, suddenly, after she had dismissed the servant and closed the doors.

"Well?" returned Nick, wondering what was coming.

"I wish your advice as a friend."

"On what point?"

"On something that is very important. You are a friend of my husband, who is away on business, and you understand just what sort of a place this is."

Nick nodded, not knowing exactly what to say.

"Now, I have just received information which alarms me greatly."

"I am sorry, madam. What is it?"

"The police intend to raid us within an hour!"

Had a bombshell exploded at his feet Nick could not have been more astonished.

"Raid you?" he said.

"Yes."

"Who told you this?"

"I got it from a member of the force who is well paid to keep us posted."

"Humph!"

"I am alone in the house—that is, with the exception of half a dozen players who are enjoying themselves up in the red room. I have two friends of Mr. McDivvers here——"

"Ah!"

"But they left less than ten minutes ago—as soon as the word was brought that the police intended to show us up."

"Too scared to face the music," said Nick.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

"Well, they had their own reasons for leaving, I imagine."

"Were they the gentlemen that came here a while ago—the two I saw on the electric car?"

"They came on the car, yes. But some time before you came."

"I know that. I passed here about an hour before I came in. I had a little other business to attend to."

"Oh! Yes, they have gone. And now I do not know what to do."

"Why not let the gentlemen get out and then put your layout out of sight?"

"The house is being watched, and the gentlemen cannot get out!"

This was disagreeable news to Nick. If the house was watched, how was he to get out unless he revealed his identity—something he did not care to do?

"Is there not some place in the house where the gentlemen can hide?" he suggested.

Mrs. McDivvers thought for a moment.

"I might place them in the wine vault," she replied. "That is the only place——"

She broke off short as heavy footsteps were heard ascending the front and back piazzas. The next moment came the command in a stern, heavy voice:

"Open, in the name of the law!"

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE LAW MAKES A MISTAKE

On hearing the command, Mrs. McDivvers uttered a slight shriek of alarm.

"They have come!" she said to Nick. "What shall we do?"

"The best we can," returned Nick, grimly at the old port. He was play-

keeper to protect her and her patrons from the justified raid of the officers of the law!

From the instant that Mrs. McDivver had spoken of the two men who were friends of her husband Nick had lost all interest in the others who might be present in the mansion. The woman had said that the men had left, and that being so, Nick fancied he had better leave also, and the quicker the better.

"It will do me no good to mix up in the brawl that is sure to take place here," he said to himself.

So when Mrs. McDivvers rushed out of the room and up the stairs to notify the players in the red room that the police were at hand, Nick did not follow her, but instead, turned toward the back of the mansion.

At the rear of the hallway the great detective found a stairs leading to the basement.

Down these stairs he skipped three at a time.

Once in the basement he made a careful but rapid investigation of the apartment.

Toward one side, directly under a small ell used for a conservatory, Nick found an incline was placed there as a coal chute and connected with several bins in the cellar.

Crawling up the incline Nick unfastened the wooden door and pushed it open to a space of several inches.

By this time it had grown somewhat dark outside, but in the coal bins it had been still darker, so Nick could see quite well.

He commanded a view of the front piazza and he made out half a dozen officers of the law, several with drawn clubs, and others with pistols.

"They mean to scoop in everything in sight," he thought. "Well, I hope they do—after I manage to get away."

Nick remained where he was for minutes. Once a couple of officers along the path down the incline had run past him, but he had not seen them.

this Linky? It seems to me I ought to remember him."

Going to his safe Nick brought out a large memorandum-book. He leafed "Camden and Philadelphia," and turned to the letter L.

"LINKY—see Frank Lincoln," he read in the index.

Turning to "LINCOLN, Frank," he found this entry:

"Frank Lincoln, known as Linky, or the Growler, an ex-prize-fighter from Allentown, card sharp, and saloon keeper, has kept several places near the river. Was once a partner of McDivvers, the three-card Monte sharp, and Jack Halliday, the counterfeiter. Has done time in four States—New Jersey, New York, Delaware, and Pennsylvania."

"That settles it," was Nick's comment, as he closed the memorandum-book and put it away. "Those robbers know both McDivvers and this Linky. Perhaps one of them is this Jack Halliday. I think I may as well take a run down to Philadelphia and scout around this Linky's saloon, if he is still running one."

With Nick, to think was to act.

Ten minutes later he was on his way to the ferry, and less than two hours after he was trudging the streets of the City of Brotherly Love.

He had assumed the disguise of a city tough, and as the back of his head was still bandaged, he looked as if he had just come out of a fight in which the other fellow had got the best of it.

He knocked around down by the water, and soon fell in with a tough who directed him to Frank Lincoln's resort, which was but a few blocks away.

The tough wanted to accompany Nick, but the detective told him off with a wink at a nearer saloon, and then the two separated.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when Nick entered Linky's place and he found the bar-room almost deserted.

But he had hardly called for a drink and sat down at one of the side tables to take it easy, when in came two men.

They passed Nick rapidly and disappeared through a door in the rear.

Both of them were tall, and while one was stout, the other was slim.

Moreover, one of them carried a small, black satchel!

As they passed the bar one of them gave a wink to the bartender, who nodded and pointed upward.

Nick became greatly interested in the newcomers, not only on account of their general appearance and the black satchel, but also because the coat of one matched the bit of cloth he had taken from the crack in the glass of Levy's show window!

"They are my men!" said Nick to himself. "I just arrived here in the nick of time."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK IS TREATED TO A SURPRISE.

Nick knew that in such a resort as that kept by Linky he would have to be careful how he proceeded.

Linky and his numerous crook friends were ever on the guard for detectives, and should he be discovered as such, the transgressors of the law would handle him "without gloves."

It was not Linky who was behind the bar, and presently, after he had finished his liquor, Nick made an inquiry concerning the proprietor.

"Gone up town on business," replied the bartender.

"Dat's too bad," replied Nick. "An' when do yer t'ink he'll be back?"

"Not for a week or two."

"Huh! Dat's just the ticket, anyway!"

"What's the matter with your head?" asked the bartender, curiously.

"Me an' a cop's club had a fallin' out," grinned Nick.

"When?"

"Las' night."

"What was the row?"

Nick pretended to hesitate, and then walking up to the bar, leaned over and whispered.

"I don't mind tellin' yer. I got der wrong watch in me pocket, an' der cop said no."

"He collared you, eh?"

"Fer about half a minnit, dat's all, brudder."

"You got away from him?"

Nick nodded.

"You are lucky."

"I could have been if he hadn't a-belted me dat crack on der cocoanut."

"Is it very bad?"

"Naw! Me head's tick when it comes ter clubs."

"What did you want to see Linky about?"

"I want ter keep kinder shady fer a few days. Havin' me head tied up is a dead give away."

"Why don't you leave the city, then?"

"I've got ter keep me eyes on a couple of killers wot's got ter divvy up a stake wid me. If I leave der city da may leave, too, an' I'll be left: see?"

"You can't stay here and work them."

"Ah, I only wanted dis place ter come to 'use da tried ter run me, dat's all. I won't stay in if dere ain't no call."

"Well, I guess Linky won't object to dat. I know him, and you say you do." "I know his partner better."

"Well, I'll be durned!"

Nick closed the door and pretended to walk up and down the street.

"Dere's a fly cop comin' up der street now!" he exclaimed. "Can't I git in der back room?"

"You can, but if you're caught say you sneaked in without my seeing you," replied the bartender.

"I'll do it, brudder, depend on me word," said Nick, and, without ceremony, he dashed through the door through which the two men had passed but a few minutes before.

The barkeeper took up a copy of *Puck*, and sitting down behind the bar, pretended to be deeply interested in the comic pictures.

Nick found himself in a small store-room, piled high with empty barrels, casks and empty beer crates. In the rear was another door leading to a dirty court-yard. At one side of the room was a narrow stairway communicating with the upper hallway in the house, a stairway which had been placed there solely for the bar-room trade.

"Linky wouldn't run simply a bar-room and nothing else," said Nick to himself. "I'll wager he has a regular ranch here."

Yet when the great detective reached the upper floor of the house, he met with a genuine surprise.

There were four rooms over the bar-room, and each of these was fitted up as a common sleeping-room with cots, wash-stands, and bureaus.

The doors to the rooms all stood wide open, and a glance into each convinced Nick that they were empty of human occupants.

Where had the two men gone?

"If they went out of that back door, then I am left," thought Nick.

But he remembered how the barkeeper had pointed upward, and felt positive that the two men had not left the house by the back way.

Where then had they gone?

The question was easier to ask than to

answer, but Nick lost no time in seeking a solution.

The great detective entered each of the four rooms and made a hasty survey.

Two of the rooms had windows opening upon a court-yard.

The hallway was quite narrow and had but two doors, that at the foot of the back stairs and that at the foot of the front.

"Those men would never have gone into the saloon and then out of that front hallway door," reasoned Nick. "So they either went out of the rear or else they are still in the building, and I am inclined to believe that the latter is the fact."

In looking around, Nick espied a place where one of the cots seemed to be shoved up rather tightly against a chimney. The peculiar situation of the cot caused him to pause, and then he suddenly pulled the cot out into the middle of the room.

A small closet, built close beside the chimney, was revealed. The door was closed, but not locked, and Nick flung it open.

He was surprised to see that the shelves of the closet had been taken out, and that another door had been cut in the back, opening into a room beyond.

With great caution, Nick got down and entered the closet, closing the door behind him. As he did so, he felt a rope down by his feet. This was connected with a leg of the cot, and by pulling upon it, Nick drew the bed close up to the chimney, just where it had been before.

"Quite ingenious, to say the least," he muttered to himself. "Not one in a thousand would find this passage-way, and when they want to cut it off completely all they have to do is to put those shelves in the closet and pile them full of clothing."

The closet door on the room side tightly closed. Nick cautiously opened the other door and peered out.

He saw beyond a narrow hallway, at the farthest end of which was a small and exceedingly dirty window. Along this hallway were several doors, all of them tightly closed.

"A crook's hiding-place," was Nick's comment, as he tiptoed his way into the hallway. "And a mighty good one, too. No wonder Linky is careless as to how many times the police raid his establishment. If he—Hullo! what's that?"

The low murmur of voices had reached his keen ears.

He followed the sounds, and soon found that they proceeded from the room nearest the dirty window.

Getting close to the door of the apartment, he had no difficulty in hearing what was being said.

There were two men inside of the room, and after he had listened for a moment, Nick became convinced that they were the very pair he was after.

"I can't do it, Jack; at least not until this broken arm of mine gets better," said the stout one. "It's still as stiff as a poker."

"Why don't you go to the doctor about it?" asked the other.

"I've been to the doctor, but an arm like that has got to help itself."

"It's too blamed bad you fell, Bill. I would rather you hadn't got the satchel at all."

"Oh, but we had to have the satchel. If we hadn't had it we could never have done the trick."

"No, but we might have got the boodle, anyway."

"Not without a fight. He carries pistols with him, you know, every time he has the bag of money."

"Well, we might have frightened him."

"Axell wasn't a man to frightened easily. Had we tackled him on the road in the ordinary way, it is more than likely that the older of us would have him in tow."

"I understand it's a regular mystery to them how that bag got empty," chuckled the slim man after a pause. "There wasn't a soul saw me exchange one for the other at the livery stable. Axtell set the bag down by the window, and just as he turned for less than half a minute I scooped it in and put the other bag in its place."

"And he walked off with the new bag as innocent as a lamb," laughed the stout man. "It was a clever move on your part, Jack Halliday."

"Hush! don't mention my last name here, Bill," cried the man spoken to, in alarm.

"Oh, it's all right. Linky told me that no one would be up here to-day. You can always depend upon Bill Devine knowing what he's doing."

"Not when he's had a few extra glasses of liquor," grumbled Halliday.

"I haven't had any more than is good for me," retorted Devine, bristling up.

"Well, let it pass. But you had better keep our names shady. Now let us get down to business on this new deal."

CHAPTER VII.

LIVELY WORK ALL AROUND.

Nick Carter was greatly interested in what he had overheard.

He had discovered that one of the robbers was Jack Halliday, the ex-counterfeiter. The other criminal, Bill Devine, was a stranger to him, but he was certain that such a slick worker had a record well worth searching up.

The two now intended to plan some new scheme, and Nick determined to catch on to everything that was said.

The great detective wished very much to know what had been done with the body of the elderly man, but knew he must keep his tongue. He had never told them so much as that he suspected that the bandits had

money would be mentioned before the two thieves left the crooks' den.

"Well, I'm ready to talk business any time you are," said Devine, after another pause. "But I'm sorry we didn't see McDivvers."

"So am I. But never mind; I have an idea that Linky can help us as much as anybody."

"If he can, so much the better. For this is a boss hiding-place—better than Mac could give us up at Bayonne."

"Well, we'll take Linky in, and so that's settled. Now, what is the plan, according to your way of it?"

"Well, the first thing is to find out what night old Harley has the most money in his safe."

"That's Saturday night, sure. So many half-holiday excursion people buying railroad tickets, and he can't take the money to the bank."

"Bah! That's right enough, but sometimes he has all the freight money, about the fifth of the month, after collections."

"Well, supposing we watch him?"

"That's what I thought. Linky will be just the man for that work, and will do it willingly for a quarter of the boodle."

"Well, after we find out he has an extra amount in his private safe, what then?"

"We'll go to his house, drug all the others, and force him to give us the combination."

"Suppose he won't do it?"

"We'll make him."

"How?"

"We'll work the fifth degree on him."

And Devine chuckled hoarsely.

"The fifth degree ought to fetch him," laughed Halliday. "I never knew it to fail."

"No, there ain't a man living, not the bravest of them, can stand up against the fifth degree."

"And after we've got the combination?"

"We'll scoop what we can and come back home. Then we can show up with Linky and

clear out for Rome. No one will ever think of looking for us across the water among the Italians."

"We'll have a clean two hundred thousand dollars and—"

Nick Carter heard no more.

At that instant there was a slight noise down the end of the narrow hall, and the great detective realized that some one was coming through the secret passage toward him.

He glanced quickly around for some place in which to hide.

But the hallway was bare.

Close at hand was the dirty window.

Brushing the cobwebs from the glass, Nick peered out.

The window opened upon a roof not four feet below the window-sill.

If he could reach this roof he might be safe.

He tried the window and found that it could be opened with ease.

He shoved it up, and a second later was out upon the roof.

There was no time to close the window again, so leaving it open, Nick tiptoed his way toward the chimney and hid behind the brickwork.

Half an hour later he saw a tall, dark man peer out of the window and then close it.

"This am not mistaken that was Linky," thought the detective, and he was right.

After the window was closed, Nick was undecided what to do.

Should he risk going back?

Linky might be on the watch, having had his suspicions aroused by the window being open.

"Well, I'll risk it," mused Nick to himself, and failing to learn that his pistol was ready for use, he approached the window from one side and peeped into one of the lower stories.

No one was in sight in the hallway, and the door to the apartment which Halliday and Devine occupied was shut.

"Linky must be in there with them" thought Nick, and hesitating no longer, he raised the window and jumped inside.

Closing the opening, he tiptoed his way once more to the doorway.

He had hardly reached it when Halliday, Devine and Linky confronted him, flinging the door open wide and covering him with their pistols.

For once-Nick Carter was taken by surprise.

"Hands up, there!" commanded Halliday.

"You have done enough spying for today," put in Devine.

"Walz right in here," added Linky.

"Hully-gee!" cried Nick, as if terror-stricken. "Don't shoot me, fellas! I ain't doin' nuttin'!"

And he jumped back, slacking from head to foot.

"Come in here!" repeated Linky.

"I will, Linky, but please put dem shootin'-irons away, will yer?"

"Who the dickers are you?" demanded the saloon-keeper in surprise.

"I'm Camden Bob from over der way. Don't yer remember me?"

"Camden Bob?"

"Dat's it!"

"But Bob was sent up for six years."

"So I was. I got out last week for good behavior and for standin' in wid der keepers."

Nick knew that Camden Bob, who had been sent up for murder killing another youth on an excursion, had belonged to the gang in which Linky trained. Camden Bob was very poor health owing the rules in prison and it was more than likely that he would have to serve out the rest of his term, which still gave a year to run.

"Well, come in," said Linky, slowly, and put down his pistol, while the others did the same.

"You changed yer ranch a little, didn't yer?" remarked Nick, as he glanced around the room in which he now found himself.

"Had to," grunted Linky. "Say, yer ain't as fat as yer uster be."

"Doin' time don't fatten nobody!" growled Nick, savagely. "Bread an' mush, an' Irish tea—ain't much to me likin', an' never was!"

"How did you get up here?" asked Linky. "Was scoutin' around ter git out of der way of der fly cops," returned the detective. "Didn't der whisky slinger downstairs tell you?"

"Oh, you are the man Buddy let into the back room?"

"Dat's me."

"Well, how did you manage to get in here?"

"Climbed over dat roof out dere. Had a deuce of a time doin' it, too."

"What did you climb over the roof for?"

"See here, wot's der matter wid yer, Linky? Are yer afraid ter trust me?" demanded Nick, pretending to get ugly.

"Now don't git mad, Bob!" returned Linky, who remembered Camden Bob's ugly temper very well. "I'm asking for the benefit of these gentlemen."

"Who are they?" And Nick scowled at Halliday and Devine, as if for two pins he could "do them."

"Never mind who we are," said Halliday, "lively. Answer Linky's questions, young man, if you want to get away without any holes in your skin!"

"Will you put holes in me skin?" blustered Nick. "I think yer smart wit dat pop gun, boy."

"Gosh, you quarreling here, Bob?" interposed Linky. "Tell me why you came over the way."

"Der fly cop was after me, dat's why. Say, who is dese two mugs, anyway?"

"They are two friends of mine."

"Do you mean to say you were not in this hallway before?" demanded Devine, sharply, undaunted by Nick's forward manner.

"Naw, I wasn't in der hall!" growled Nick, facing the robber, with his jaws set and his chin sticking out as if ready to fight.

"You lie!"

"Wot's dat?"

"I say you lie! I believe you are a spy!"

"That's what I believe!" added Halliday. "He don't strike me as a fellow just from prison."

Halliday turned to Linky.

"Ask him some very personal questions, about something an outsider would know nothing about."

"I will," returned Linky.

"Say, Bob, these gentlemen won't be satisfied until I have put you to the test. Give me the old pass-word—the one we used to use in Camden at Captain Ready's ranch."

"Blood and gold!" returned Nick, promptly.

"You are wrong!" cried Linky, and his face changed color.

"Yer lie!" howled Nick. "Dat's der very words der cap'n give me himself."

"Not much!"

Before Linky could say another word, he received a blow in the face that stretched him all but senseless upon the floor.

"Here, that won't do!" cried Halliday, who was more impressed by Nick's manner than by his words. "What do you mean by hitting him so hard as that?"

"Wot does he mean by goin' back on me?" sputtered Nick. "I helped him ter lots of his dust, I did, an' dis is der way I git treated for it!"

And Nick stood over Linky, as if to knock him down.

But now Devine sprang up behind Nick and threw back the detective's coat, revealing the butt of Nick's revolver.

"He has a gun!" he cried. "Throw up your hands, you spy!"

And once more he leveled his revolver at Nick's head, while Halliday quickly followed suit.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DROP FOR LIFE.

It did not take Nick Carter long to realize that the time for action, not words, had arrived.

With a quick jump, Nick precipitated his body upon Devine and knocked the robber's pistol upward. It went off and the bullet crashed through the ceiling.

Halliday endeavored to fire at Nick, but found himself unable to do so without endangering his partner's life.

"Get out of the way, Bill!" he cried. "I'll pepper him!"

With a bound, Nick gained the hallway, just as Halliday fired, the shot grazing the great detective's shoulder.

Nick knew it would be useless to endeavor to escape by the secret passage-way. There was not time, nor was there time to open the window he had before found so convenient.

He accordingly dashed down the hallway until he came to another door. It was unlatched, and throwing it open, he slipped through and banged the door shut after him.

Nick now found himself in a room similar to that which he had just left. In one corner was stored several trunks and boxes. Two windows lit up the room, and he noted with satisfaction that both opened upon the street next door to Linky's saloon.

Thinking that he could thus surround his enemies, he dashed upon the door, as Devine and Halliday had vowed to burn it down with them.

"Do dat ag'in an' I'll shoot yer!" cried Nick, and he turned the key, which was in the lock.

Silently he made his way to one of the windows and noiselessly raised the sash.

A number of wires ran close to the window-sill and not over a dozen feet away was a telegraph pole.

Pocketing his pistol, Nick swung himself out of the window and made a leap for the wires.

He caught them easily enough, and as soon as he had a good hold commenced to work his way toward the pole.

He had hardly moved a yard when there was a crash inside of the room which told him that the two robbers and Linky had broken down the door.

An instant later the trio of criminals appeared at the window.

Halliday was in front, pistol in hand.

"There he is!" he shouted. "I'll teach him to play the spy on us!"

He raised his pistol, and without warning fired point-blank at the great detective.

Had Nick retained his hold upon the telegraph wires he would have been shot.

But at the instant that Halliday fired, Nick let go his hold and dropped like a lump to the pavement below!

The bullet whizzed over his head and went crashing through the window of a drug store on the opposite side of the street.

"The devil!" howled Linky. "What did you want to fire at him out here for?"

"I wanted to kill him!" growled Halliday, as he drew back to avoid being seen.

"I am afraid this will get us into a bad scrape here," put in Devine.

"Well, I wouldn't have fired if I had thought twice," admitted Halliday. "Come on; the quicker we get out the better."

In the meantime Nick lay sprawling on the stone pavement below.

He had had no time to prepare himself for the drop, and on landing had rolled over and struck the side of his head on the curbstone.

A crowd of excited passers-by soon collected, attracted not only by Nick's fall, but also by the pistol-shot. In the crowd was a policeman, who at once rang up an ambulance.

"What's the matter with him?"

"He fell from the telegraph wires."

"What was he doing there?"

"Don't know; inspecting them, I suppose."

"It was a bad fall."

"I'll bet he hasn't a whole bone left."

And so the talk ran on until the ambulance arrived, and Nick was bundled into it.

The ambulance had hardly started when the great detective came in.

"Arrest those men, three of them," were his first words.

"What men?" asked the doctor's assistant, who rode beside him on the couch.

"The men at the window," returned Nick, struggling to sit up. "Where the dickens am I?"

"In an ambulance. Better lie down. We'll take you to the hospital and see that you are well cared— Hullo! Hold up!"

For Nick had sprung up and opened the rear doors of the ambulance. The doctor's assistant tried to stop him, but before he could do so Nick was out on the ground.

"I'll take care of myself," cried the detective, with a wave of his hand. "I am not so badly hurt as you seem to think."

Nick spoke the truth. The fall, which could have almost killed a man with a less robust constitution and physical make-up, had merely stunned him for the time being.

It's next felt decidedly light, and there was a thump on his face, directly below his left ear.

He staggered back to Linky's saloon, where he met the policeman who had found him.

The officer, who had just succeeded in dispersing the crowd, could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Be the ghost av St. Patrick!" he gasped. "An' is it the mon that had the fall, I dunno?"

"Yes, I'm the man," returned Nick. "And I am likewise a detective. I want to arrest three men who are about these two houses. Whistle for help."

"But, sur, I dunno——"

"Whistle for assistance, I tell you!" returned Nick, sharply, and then whispered something into the Irishman's ear.

Instantly the officer's manner changed.

"Be the phowers!" he murmured, and then blew his whistle.

It was not long before two other bluecoats arrived. In the meantime Nick entered the saloon, only to find that the bartender had left for parts unknown.

The great detective dashed up the stairs in the back and into the room which contained the secret passage-way.

As he did so he heard a series of hurried exclamations which apparently came from overhead.

He was not mistaken, for a second later came heavy footsteps and the banging of a scuttle.

"They are out on the roof," he said to himself, and rushed through the secret passage-way and out into the hallway of the adjoining house.

Here, in one of the rooms, he found a ladder which led to a scuttle.

He mounted the ladder two rungs at a time. Reaching the top, he threw open the wooden door and peered out upon the flat roof above.

He was just in time to see Linky, who had gone to the garage to get a hidden package, sliding over the edge of the roof to a fire escape situated on the rear wall of the next building, a factory.

"Stop, Linky!" he cried. "Stop, or I'll fire at you!"

"Go to the devil!" cried the saloon-keeper, and the next moment he was gone.

Springing up on the roof, Nick ran to the edge and peered over. By this time Linky had gained the next lower flooring of the fire-escape and was preparing to descend still farther.

"Linky, I'll give you just half a minute to get back here," said Nick, sternly. "If you refuse to come, I'll put a bullet through your head!"

The saloon-keeper stopped short. He had never before heard a man speak so quietly yet with such evident determination. He looked up and saw that Nick's pistol was pointed squarely at him. His chances of escape, should Nick fire, were exceedingly slim.

"You'll shoot me?" he said, sullenly.

"Yes; up with you."

The saloon-keeper hesitated only a second longer.

"All right, then, I'll give in," he said. "Put up your gun."

"Not much! Just march back up here."

Linky grumbled and swore, but it availed him nothing. Nick compelled him to return to the roof; and five minutes later the saloon-keeper was on his way to the police station.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE RIVER.

Nick instructed the policeman who took Linky to jail to keep the fact of his arrest a secret and this the officer promised should be done.

As soon as the blue-coat had departed with his prisoner the detective and the other policeman began a search of the two houses for some trace of Halliday and Devine.

It was useless. The two robbers had dis-

appeared, and in what direction must remain a matter of conjecture.

Nick was deeply chagrined at his failure to bring the two chief criminals to justice. He ordered a careful search to be made of every nook and corner of the crooks' ranch. This brought but little to light. Levy's diamonds, Colonel Wilson's cash and Mrs. Lansdowne's jewelry still remained among the missing.

"I must be growing old," grumbled Nick to himself, when the search was brought to a close. "Had I worked it right every one of the three would be behind the bars."

He telegraphed to Chick to come on and aid him, and then, changing his disguise once more, he began an investigation by himself, which was far more thorough than that conducted when with the policeman, yet it brought nothing to light.

"It looks as if I was stumped, and no mistake," thought Nick, as he came to a halt in the little court-yard behind the saloon. "About the only thing left to do is to go it blind until I strike the trail again."

On the other side of the court-yard was a tenement-house occupied principally by negro families. An open hallway led directly from the yard to the next street.

"If they came down into the yard, it is likely that they ran through the hallway," reasoned Nick. "But would they dare to do that? Wouldn't they fear a policeman would be waiting for them around the corner?"

Nick walked into the hallway, and, seeing a couple of negro wenches gossiping on the stairs, asked them about the two missing men.

"No one went frough heah, sah," returned one of the wenches. "Did du, Li?"

"No, no, honey, not on yo' lif," retorted the second colored woman.

"We have been a standin' 'ere for half an hour, too, honey," added the other.

Nick walked back into the saloon. The front door had been broken in so

police, so there was no one around to bother him as he lit his dark lantern and proceeded, for the third time, into the cellar, which was little better than a coal-hole.

"They may have an underground passage-way," he said to himself. "Many such places as this have them."

He peered around the coal-hole for some time without finding anything to interest

Then, just as he was about to return to the saloon above, something glittering among the coals at his feet attracted his attention. He picked it up. It was a ring, with the prongs for holding an oval stone on the upper side!

"Halliday's ring, as sure as fate! First I got the stone, and now I have the ring!"

"This proves that he must have been down here at one time or another.

"It's more than likely he came down when he was hard pushed and did not dare to show himself on the street."

Having reached this conclusion, Nick placed the ring in his pocket and continued to search around the coal-hole.

At last, in one of the darkest corners, he came across a small iron ring which had previously been covered by coal dust.

He pulled upon the ring as hard as he could, and succeeded in raising a trap-door, which was partly under the coal and partly under the wall.

An opening scarcely two feet square was thus made, looking into inky darkness beyond.

Without hesitation as to what fate might lead him to, Nick lowered himself into the hole and closed the trap after him.

This dark lantern lit up the space in which he now found himself fairly well, and with some caution Nick moved forward down a

stone staircase which descended into the

cellar. This was really four feet back

"A fine route for river-thieves to take if they want to escape detection by the harbor police," thought Nick. "Perhaps that was another of Linky's wrinkles for getting rich. Tracking the colonel's money and Levy's jewels has led me into a brand-new gang of criminals and criminal resorts."

At length, after Nick had passed along for a distance of fully five hundred feet, he saw a faint light ahead. He extinguished his lantern and moved along with more caution than ever.

The light came from some larger opening beyond. When Nick reached the threshold of this place he found it was as comfortable a room as one would wish, but directly under one of the large docks.

"A river-thieves' rendezvous and nothing less," was his comment. "Now to learn if Halliday and Devine came this way."

Hardly had the last thought crossed Nick's mind than he heard the splashing of oars at the end of the pier.

"All right, captain, shove off," he heard, in Devine's voice, and then came more splashing as the rowboat was pushed away from the dock.

At the risk of being seen, Nick dashed through the room and out at the front. From between the piles at the end of the dock he saw a rowboat moving rapidly over the water.

It was not going toward Camden, but down in the direction of a large schooner which lay at anchor opposite Woodbury.

"Can it be possible that Devine and Halliday are going to slip off to sea?"

It was only just that Nick had a short distance to go before he reached the upper deck of the schooner.

On the deck he saw above the water's edge, hidden in a corner, a man and a boy, evidently father and son, sit in a new boat, eating a hearty lunch.

"See here, do you want to earn a couple of dollars?" asked Nick of the man.

"A couple o' dollars?"

"That's what I said."

"What doin'?"

"Rowing me a short distance."

"Of course. Jump in, stranger."

Nick hopped into the boat.

"Do you see that rowboat out there?"

"Yes."

"Well, follow that boat, and keep as close to it as you can."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Where's the money?" asked the man, suspiciously.

"Here," and Nick produced a new two-dollar bill and handed it over with his characteristic promptness.

The man squinted at it to see that it was genuine, and then stowed it away in his pocket.

"It's a heap o' money for such a job," he remarked.

"That depends on how far you have to follow them," said Nick, with a wink. "But I don't think it will be very far."

"Off we go, Peter."

"Yes, dad."

"Do you want me to catch that boat for you?"

"No; only keep it in sight."

"Kinda spyin' on 'em, hey?"

"That's it."

"Well, it's none o' my business, so long as I'm paid for my work," remarked the man, as he and his son bent to their oars.

By this time the boat containing Halliday, Devine and the stranger whom they had called captain was standing well out into the river.

It was true! directly for the schooner

"The man going on board, that's certain,"

thought Nick. "The question is, will the schooner remain at anchor or sail at once?"

In ten minutes the first rowboat had come alongside of the schooner. A rope ladder was thrown over the side, and Nick saw the three men mount to the deck.

"Hold on a bit," he said to his companions, and they stopped rowing.

"We can't teller that schooner if she sails," remarked the man who had made a contract with the detective.

"I know that, and I have a plan I wish you to help me carry out."

"All right."

"In the first place, can I trust you?"

"Every trip, boss."

"Well, then, these men are har' r' thieves!"

"Gee shoo! You don't say."

"And I want the police to capture them."

"That's right; they ought to be caught."

"Can you take a message from me to the chief of the harbor police?"

"Of course."

"They will probably send out a boat to capture the schooner. If you will go with them, so that no mistake is made in finding the right boat, I'll see to it that you'll see nothing for your services."

"I'll do it. But where are you going?"

"I'm going aboard that schooner."

"How? They'll see you sure, and if they are river pirates——"

"I'll fix that all right. All I want is this oyster-basket."

"That oyster-basket!" repeated father and son, in surprise.

"That's it. Now, here's the message."

Taking out a note-book, Nick wrote down a few hasty words on one of the pages, and then tore out the page and folded it up.

"Now, remember that every minute is precious," he said to the men, as he handed them the paper. "You know what to look for the others?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then all right; I will depend upon you. Now give me that basket. You can keep my coat and shoes and revolver for me."

As Nick spoke he took off his coat and shoes and stuck them under one of the boat's seats. He was sorry to be deprived of the use of a weapon, but, of course, could keep no revolver dry in the water.

Then taking up the empty oyster-basket, he threw it overboard, bottom upward.

"Now, when I am under the basket tow me as close to the schooner as you can without exciting suspicion," he said. "Then get back to shore with all possible speed."

"Well, I swear!" declared the man. "Is that the way you are going to git aboard?"

"Yes."

"You are running a big risk."

"I have run many big risks in my life."

"Say, you must be one of them detectives, an't you?"

"You've struck it. Now remember what I said."

And watching his chance, Nick Carter dropped overboard into the Delaware River.

CHAPTER X.

A DANGEROUS GAME.

Nick knew perfectly well that he was making a very dangerous move.

Unattended, he intended to board the schooner and secrete himself, and thus learn all he could concerning Halliday and Devine's plans, and what they had done with their rich booty.

He knew that if he was caught the robbers would do what they could to take his life. That they were desperate characters was already well established.

Yet the great detective did not falter. He was made of sterner stuff and had never yet turned his back upon a foe. He had made up his mind to a certain course of action.

As soon as he dropped overboard from the rowboat he allowed himself to disappear entirely under the water. He had located the basket well, and when he arose, his head came up in the empty basket, and there he allowed it to remain.

There was a short fishing line attached to one side of the basket, and this the boy in the boat seized. The man began to row, and thus the detective was towed along through the water.

The schooner was not over a thousand feet distant, and in a few minutes they had passed over three-quarters of this space.

"Now let me drop," called out Nick, in a low tone, and the boy at once let go his hold upon the string.

Then the rowboat was swung around, and soon Nick Carter was left alone.

Besides covering his head, the oyster basket had a certain buoyancy, and by moving his body and legs, Nick had but little difficulty in keeping afloat.

There were a number of holes in the sides of the basket, and through these Nick kept a strict watch upon the schooner.

"Say, Bobbins," he heard some one call out, presently. "What's that thing out there?"

"It's an old oyster basket floating around," was the reply.

"Weren't those men in the boat towing it?"

"Not that I know of."

"I thought they were."

"If it floats within reach I'll hook it up," was the careless answer of Bobbins, who was dozing away on a pile of sail-cloth.

"All right," remarked his companion, and went below.

Nick took good care that the basket should not come within Bobbins' reach.

He allowed it to move along slowly with

the current, and then made a turn at the bow of the schooner, out of the sailor's sight.

Here the anchor chain hung low down, and casting aside his strange disguise, Nick caught the chain and hoisted himself up until his head was on a level with the deck.

A glance showed him that no one was looking in his direction, and like a flash he was over the rail and into a place of security, while the oyster basket floated off as before.

No one was now on deck but Nick and Lobbins, and the great detective found it very easy to avoid the half asleep sailor.

He rightfully guessed that Halliday, Devine, and the captain were in the cabin, and watching his chance, he crawled down the companion-way and hid behind a large easy-chair in one corner.

The men he was after were seated around the centre-table, poring over a quantity of diamonds which were spread out on a bit of captain's skin.

"Yes, I don't doubt but what they are worth a hundred thousand dollars, Jack," remarked the captain. "Some of them are gems of the first water."

"Right you are, Captain Gregg," said Halliday. "The lady's jewels are a little the purer, but all are good."

"And where do you expect to dispose of them?"

"In Boston, if you will take us there," said Devine.

"I'll take you there all right enough," replied Captain Grigg. "We can start within the hour, if you say so."

"No! We have a little business to settle within Canada first."

"But I thought you said the police were on your trail?"

"They'll never catch us, I reckon he ain't fit for us."

"Well, well, for us on land and sea," said

Devine. "That is, if he isn't half dead from his tumble."

"Is he the fellow that tumbled from the telegraph pole in front of Linky's saloon?"

"Yes."

"I heard they carried him off to the hospital. By the way, where is Linky?"

"Haven't any idea," replied Halliday. "He said he would try to get to Romer's, and would meet us at Larson's place to-morrow."

"Is he going to help you in the business in Camden?"

"Yes."

"Is there much in it?"

"We expect fifty thousand dollars, and we may get a hundred thousand."

"Phew! wouldn't mind being in that deal."

"Well, captain, you never lost anything on me, and you shan't this trip," returned Halliday. "I always remember a friend."

"I know you do, Jack."

"We used to pull together when we shoved the queer," said Halliday. "Those were great deals, eh?"

"You bet! By the way, boys, let's wet up."

The two robbers were agreeable, and Captain Grigg brought from a closet a big black bottle and three glasses.

"Here's your health and the success of your new venture," exclaimed the captain, when the glasses were filled.

The bumper was drunk, and then the diamonds were examined even more carefully than before.

Nick Carter, from his place of concealment, could not help but admire the display.

"And what of that money?" asked the captain, presently.

"What money?" asked Devine.

"The twenty-eight thousand you scooped in in Mauch Chunk?"

"That's safe right here."

And Devine tapped his breast pocket.

"I don't know about that."

monds and jewelry only," added Halliday. "The money will be divided as soon as this Camden affair is over."

"Who is that to be worked on?"

"Old Harley."

"What—the railroad cashier?"

"Exactly."

"He'll be a rich customer," mused Captain Grigg.

"Say, why not let me give you a hand? I would like it, just for the novelty."

"An't you afraid?" queried Halliday, with a wink.

"I'm not afraid of the devil himself!" roared Captain Grigg. "Just say the word, and I'll be with you quick enough."

Halliday and Devine talked the matter over, and it was finally decided to allow the captain to become one of the party who were to rob Robert Harley, the cashier of the O.

R. N. J. R. R.

All the plans as far as practicable were arranged, and it is needless to state that Nick Carter drank in every word concerning them.

When the trio in the cabin were having a final bumper, word was sent down to Captain Grigg that one of the sailors had come back to the schooner drunk and was kicking up a fearful muss on deck.

"I'll teach him a lesson!" roared the captain. "Thompson wants his head cut!"

And he rushed up the companion-way to order the sailor in irons.

A moment later those in the cabin heard a fierce quarrel above them. Then there was a rush up and down the stairs, followed a blood-bursting roar, with Captain Grigg shouting:

"Teach him a lesson! Teach him all! Teach him all, as he ares and kickeid the sailor in the ribs and face. Will tell you all about it to-morrer! And that!"

Up on the deck, you away to the

police!" cried the drunken sailor. "I know I've had a—hic—bit too much of liquor, but that an't no cause for you to—hic—kick me to death, sir!"

"But I will kick you to death!" foamed Captain Grigg, who was himself feeling the influence of the liquor he had drank. "There's another for you!"

And he gave Thompson another kick in the side of the head which fairly made the bones crack.

"Don't you get drunk again!"

"Let up, Captain Grigg, or I'll have you locked up, as sure as my name is—"

"Locked up, eh? Take that for saying it!"

And once more Captain Grigg raised his heavy boot, intending this time to give it to Thompson directly in the face, a blow that would have crushed the sailor's nose and perhaps more.

Nick Carter could stand no more. He had witnessed many a brutal and uncalled-for attack, but nothing so contemptible as this. Ere the captain could deliver the blow the detective had him by the leg, and with a quick jerk, Captain Grigg was landed flat upon his back!

A perfect uproar followed.

"Who is this?"

"Where did he come from?"

"It must be a detective!"

"It's the detective that was after us in Linky's place!" cried Halliday, in alarm.

"Right you are," returned Devine. "He wan't taken to the hospital after all."

"Thank—hic—you," mumbled Thompson, failing to know I've got on the boat."

"Shut him down!" went on Halliday. "He may have friends yet—jipoo!"

Reviewers were about, and Nick told them that he was in a dangerous situation.

"It will do you no good to shout, boy,"

calmly, "so you might as well put up your shooting irons."

"Why?"

"For my friends have complete command of this schooner."

At these words Captain Grigg uttered a string of curses.

"It's a lie!"

"He is bluffing."

"Call Bobbins!"

"Trow him down, anyway! It will be one less to fight!"

The three men then set upon Nick.

He received half a dozen blows on the shoulders and arms, and a bullet grazed his left cheek, leaving a streak of blood behind it.

But he fought on undaunted, and at last managed to gain the deck.

In the meantime the drunken sailor, Thompson, who had caused all of the trouble, took time by the forelock and crawled out of sight into the schooner's hold.

Once on deck, Nick did not hesitate what to do next.

He knew it would be useless to remain on board.

There were four men against him, and every one of the quartet was heavily armed.

His only chance of safety, therefore, lay in flight.

He turned to the stern of the schooner, where lay the boat belonging to the craft.

He took a flying leap into this and quickly untied the painter.

Then he caught up the oars, shoved off, and began to row as he had never before done.

Captain Grigg, Halliday, and Devine came on deck just in time to see him take his first stroke, and their rage and disappointment knew no bounds.

"Fire at him! He must not get away!"

howled Devine, and he was the first to discharge his pistol at Nick's retreating form. The others quickly followed suit.

But their haste made their aim poor, and not a single bullet touched Nick Carter.

"Isn't there another boat handy?" asked Devine, impatiently, as soon as they realized that Nick was out of the range of their weapons.

"No other rowboat," said Captain Grigg. "I have one, but it is out for repairs."

"Then set sail and run him down," cried Halliday. "And lose no time about it!"

His order was at once obeyed.

CHAPTER XI.

WORKING THE FIFTH DEGREE.

It was now a race of muscle against wind.

Nick saw the sails on the schooner being hoisted, and he at once understood what Captain Grigg and the others intended to do.

The wind was blowing from the schooner directly toward him, and he knew that if he kept on his present course he would soon be run down.

He accordingly changed the direction in which he was moving, and then bent to the oars with renewed energy.

"They'll try to get near enough to me to shoot me," he reasoned. "So it's a case of life or death."

On over the waters glided the boat Nick occupied.

From his seat he saw all the canvas on the schooner stretched, and saw Captain Grigg himself take the wheel.

There was a stiff breeze blowing, and it was not long before the distance between the schooner and the rowboat was considerably lessened.

But then the schooner suddenly stopped, and came to the Nick could not understand it.

He was now not very far from the shore, and his chances of escape seemed fairly good.

But suddenly the wind freshened up and swerved several points to the east.

This gave the schooner a chance to bear directly down upon him, and Captain Grigg lost no time in grasping the unexpected opportunity.

On came the schooner, gaining speed at every yard.

Nick endeavored to row to one side of her, but Captain Grigg, at the wheel, would not allow him to do so.

Bang! crash!

The schooner struck the rowboat with tremendous force, cutting the somewhat old craft completely in half and sinking her almost instantly.

"Good!" shouted Devine, who was standing in the bow, pistol in hand. "That's the time you did it!"

"Where is the detective?" asked Halliday, anxiously.

"Cut in two with the boat!"

"What?"

"Yes; you knocked him in great shape!"

"Do you suppose we killed him?" questioned Captain Grigg, leaving the wheel in Hains' care and coming forward.

"I don't see how he could live after that."

"Let us look for his remains, then."

This was done, and the parts of the old boat gathered in for galley wood, but nothing was seen of Nick Carter's body.

"Must have gone to the bottom," said Captain Grigg.

"He is so," said Halliday, grimly. "Well, it's an easy way to get rid of him."

"It is," said Devine.

"You are congeen with our plans un-
til now."

"That is so. Let us put over to Canfield."

And the schooner's course was changed accordingly.

In the meanwhile, what of Nick Carter?

Was he really dead, as Devine had intimated?

Far from it.

At the moment when the collision occurred Nick was sitting on the middle seat of the boat, with an oar in each hand.

Dropping both oars, the detective gave a quick somersault over backward, landing in the bow of the boat at the moment that it went down.

It was this peculiar movement which made Devine think the detective had been cut in two.

Nick's body scraped along the side of the swiftly rushing schooner for a couple of seconds, and then he found himself in clear water, with a portion of the wrecked boat floating close at hand.

Caught with a sudden idea, he allowed the wreckage to float along untouched, and, taking a deep breath, dove out of sight beneath the surface.

Once under the water, he struck out for shore. When out of breath he bobbed up just long enough to take a fresh supply of air into his lungs, and then once more disappeared from sight.

This Nick kept up for fully ten minutes, and by that time he was out of the range of vision of those on board the schooner.

He then began to swim along more leisurely, aiming for that part of the shore which appeared the nearest.

It was several minutes after that when he espied a steam tug coming out from one of the docks and heading directly for the schooner.

The steam tug meant to pass close by him, and Nick determined to kill the captain out of her.

What was his surprise to learn, as soon as

the tug came near enough, that the craft belonged to the harbor police and had on board the man Nick had hired to deliver the message.

Nick was taken on board, and explanations followed. The captain in charge of the tug wished to arrest those on board of the schooner at once, but Nick asked him to wait.

"I wish them to be caught red-handed, so that there will be no trouble in convicting them," he said.

"But won't they skip?" asked the harbor official.

"No."

Accordingly the tug was turned back to Philadelphia, and the schooner with the criminals on board was allowed to pursue its own course unmolested.

Nick Carter knew the men with whom he had to deal.

"Halliday and Devine have lots of nerve," he reasoned. "They won't skip out until that Harley robbery is an accomplished fact. They are dead game chaps, both of them."

That evening Nick ran across Chick, who had just come in from Allentown. The first assistant had much to tell, but nothing that was new to his chief.

While Nick had his sore head attended to Chick was sent over to Camden to play guard over the interests of Robert Harley, the master of the O. B. & N. J. R. R.

Chick learned that Harley would have an unusual amount of money on hand the following day. It was for freight, and would not all be paid after banking hours.

"That is just what the other two wait for," said the great detective. "I think we

will be safe in making preparations to bag them."

"You are right, as you always are," returned Chick. "Shall you take the police along?"

"Yes; but I want Wick, too. I would rather depend on my own men than on a hundred outside officers."

So a telegram was sent to Wick, in New York, and in a few hours the second assistant was on the ground.

On the following afternoon Robert Harley received the sum of forty-seven thousand dollars.

It was too late to put the money in the bank, and accordingly, accompanied by a private messenger, he took the money to his residence. Here he placed it in his safe along with a number of his private securities.

Another man would have been nervous over the thought of having so much cash on hand, but Robert Harley was not.

It was an old story to him, and he ate his supper carelessly, and then sat down to his evening paper without a second thought in regard to what his great strong-box contained.

At half-past nine he had read all he cared to, and after a short smoke, he retired to bed.

He was a widower, and occupied the entire second floor of his residence alone, the three servants sleeping upon the third floor.

It did not take Harley long to undress, and five minutes after he had hopped into bed he was fast asleep.

He had hardly closed his eyes when the window over the porch was shattered and three men, one full of

Their course of action had been decided upon previous to entering the mansion, and now they proceeded to carry it out without a word speaking.

While Devine and Halliday tiptoed their way noiselessly to either side of the bed, Captain Grigg struck a match and lit the gas.

Devine tapped Robert Harley on the shoulder.

With a start the railroad cashier awoke.

Two pistols were pressed to his forehead.

"Don't you dare to make a sound above a whisper," commanded Devine.

For the moment the cashier was too frightened to speak.

His tongue seemed clove to the roof of his mouth, and great beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

"For Heaven's sake, what does this mean?" he gasped, at last.

"Hush!" commanded Halliday. "Not above a whisper, do you understand?"

"But what does it mean?" asked Harley again, but this time in a much lower voice.

"It means that you are entirely in our power, Robert Harley," returned Halliday. "And you will find it to your interest to do as we command."

"But what do you wish?"

"We wish the money you have in the safe down in your library."

Harley started.

"I have no money down there," he said, faintly.

"That is a lie!" cried Devine. "We know you have a large wad. We want that money, and we are bound to have it."

"Even if we have to pass over your dead

body to obtain it," added Captain Grigg, grimly.

"No! no! It is not mine!"

"That makes no difference to us," went on Halliday. "Now give us the combination."

"I—I dare not!"

"Bah! you must!"

"No! no! My honor is at stake!"

"And so is your life!"

"But what will they say?" gasped Harley, in horror. "I will be ruined—they will send me to prison!"

"We'll fix that all right. We'll bind you up so that when they find you they'll know it was burglars took the money."

"I cannot give you the combination," said Harley. "Indeed, I cannot, gentlemen!"

"Why don't you try your fifth degree?" suggested Captain Grigg, significantly.

"I will," muttered Halliday. "I'll bring him to his senses. Once more, will you give me the combination?"

"I dare not!" pleaded Harley.

Without another word, Halliday drew from his pocket a slender bit of iron about as thick as a slate pencil.

He thrust the iron into the gas-jet until the metal was at a red heat.

"Do you see this?" he said. "I am going to thrust this into your ear. How do you like the prospect?"

Harley would have shrieked out, but Devine clapped his hand over the cashier's mouth.

"Now hold him till I give him a taste of it," said Halliday, motioning to his two companions.

"Stop! Hands up, every one of you!"

The command came from the hall doorway,

and, looking up, the criminals found themselves confronted by Nick Carter, Chick and Wick and several officers, all of whom had entered the mansion through a kitchen window a quarter of an hour before.

"The devil!" cried Devine, while Halliday dropped the hot iron rod and felt for his pistol.

A fierce struggle ensued, but in the end all three of the criminals were subdued and taken into custody.

Then Nick and Chick went down to the dock where the schooner was tied up. They

arrested Bobbins, and down in one of the state-rooms found the booty Halliday and Devine had taken from Axtell, Levy and Mrs. Lansdowne.

The criminals, as well as Linky, were all sent to the State prison for a term of years, and Nick Carter and his plucky assistants were well rewarded for their quick work in bringing the rascals to justice.

THE END.

The next number will contain "Nick Carter's Grateful Client; or, Saving the Honor of the Old Man's Boy."

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